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ABSTRACT

Successful university/school collaborations result in meaningful staff development programs that demonstrate shared goals and expectations, that promote a sense of community, and that provide order and discipline for all involved. Institutional collaborations occur when educational organizations combine their resources and personnel to improve the educational experiences of school children. Planning for staff development consists of three stages: mobilization, implementation, and institutionalization. The key to successful program planning lies within the efforts made during the mobilization phase; much effort, such as establishing a university liaison who is familiar with the decision-makers, must be expended before a planning session takes place. Preliminary discussions should examine the proposed program's appeal to diverse groups of prospective participants, its realism and relevance, and its responsiveness to staff's and bureaucratic sponsors' needs. Additional factors to consider include the rotation of planning sites, prospective participants, the agenda, and a postimplementation program evaluation schedule. A working case study included in this document outlining the collaborative efforts of Kent State University, Ohio, and its elementary education intern and human genetics projects, serves as an example of the staff development program's goals and adaptability. (7 references) (KM)

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by

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The Risky Business of University/School Collaboration

Leo W. Anglin and Karen J. Viechnicki

University/school collaboration is a vital link in the effort of school reform. Collaboration usually occurs in two different ways. Practitioners anxious to effect change within their schools and classrooms seek help from colleges and universities or faculty and staff from a college initiate dialogue with educators in school districts. Successful collaboration ought to result in meaningful staff development programs. The word "meaningful" is key in planning inservice designed and implemented in response to verifiable needs. The response ought to demonstrate shared goals and expectations, promote a sense of community, and provide order and discipline for all activity (Purkey & Smith, 1982).

In this paper, collaboration refers to institutional collaboration which occurs when educational institutions combine their resources and personnel to improve staff development that may improve educational experiences of children (Fox, Anglin, Fromberg, & Grady, 1986). Institutional collaboration is different from personal collaboration in that there are more than individuals to keep in mind, more issues to address, and more people to satisfy. Institutional collaboration is more than working together--it is problem finding and problem solving. Through problem finding, the university/school team is able to rotate the puzzle 180° and oftentimes find the missing pieces. Problem solving enables the collaborators to implement an agreed-upon solution. Depending on how collaboration is pursued, it can be effective or it can be a considerable

waste of person hours. Collaboration provides an added dimension to the school-student perspective or the university-student perspective.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss a working model for institutional collaboration. The model may be used as a guide by university/school collaborators to find and solve problems. This paper will discuss the risks involved in such an effort and provide recommendations for routinizing the process.

The Model

The model for staff development planning (see Figure 1) describes a linear continuum for the university/school collaborators to follow. It is divided into three major sections: mobilization, implementation, and institutionalization. Berman (1981) views educational change as involving these three processes that need to be addressed within the framework of context and time.

The key to the use of the model focuses on mobilization. The authors' contention is that much preliminary work must be done mobilizing the effort before a planning session takes place. Most universities and schools begin staff development at the planning session stage omitting the important mobilization phase. Primarily this occurs because during mobilization the contacts, establishment of liaison, and preliminary meetings are usually done above and beyond what individuals' professional roles demand. Consequently, there must be an extra effort by persons to build a foundation for planning. Ordinarily this occurs at large formal meetings where representatives from institutions are convened, in informal social gatherings, or by persistent telephone contact.

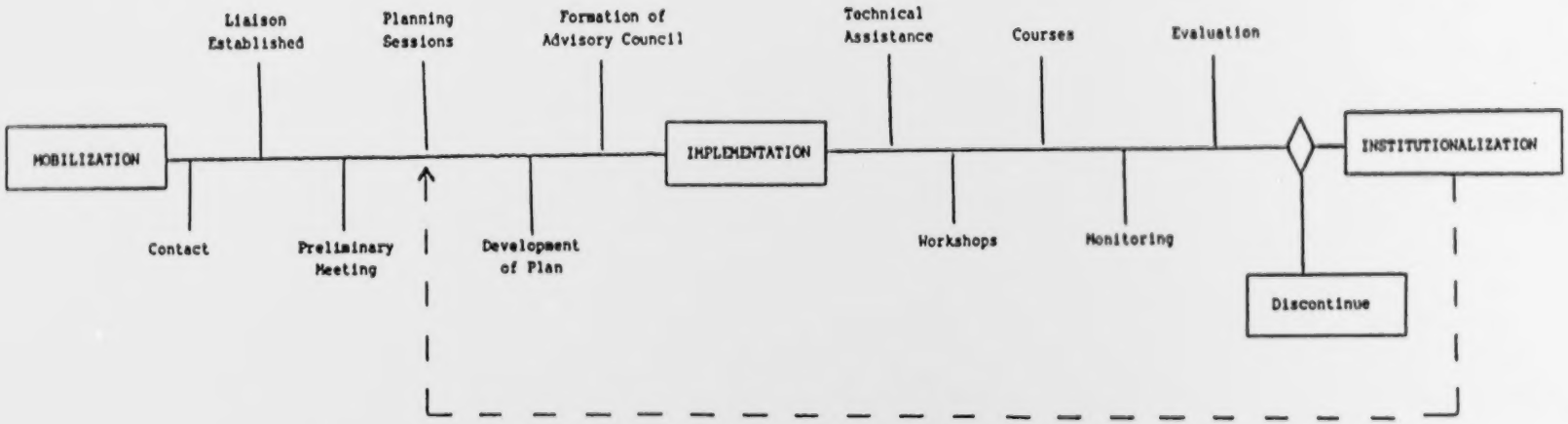

Figure 1: Model for Staff Development Planning

Mobilization: Establishing Initial Contact and Liaison

University/school collaboration is risky business. It involves a great deal of time on the part of all actors, as parameters are established and negotiations begin. Quite frankly, the size and shape of the table must be decided before everyone will sit down. Initial contact between a university and school may be made at any level. A request may come from an assistant superintendent for curriculum who has identified some needs in the district. It may come from a representative of the teachers' association that desires inservice for certification renewal or increase of salary. Sometimes persons making requests walk into Deans' offices with friendly petitions. Other times a professor may want to expand a program in response to state mandates. Regardless of how the request comes to the college, it should be funnelled to one individual whose office acts as a clearinghouse. This liaison eliminates duplication of efforts and miscommunication. Trust must be established quickly and embarrassing situations must be avoided at all costs. Often an institution's credibility is judged upon the initial encounter. Individuals want to feel good about calling the correct office.

A first discussion must consider whether or not to respond to the request. The liaison in conjunction with department chairs must consider instructors' expertise and availability. Decision makers from all groups, administrative and faculty, should be considered early. The key decision makers will be the persons to promote the staff development within the higher education and K-12 organization. This can happen through formal or informal structures. The liaison must know who the decision makers are, what decisions they have to make, what resources they need, and what criteria they use in making the decisions. Management personnel involved in

the decision making have to be conceptually prepared. They need to have all their questions answered and they must know all the options. An initial question ought to be, "How does the proposal fit with the mission of the institution?"

Preliminary Meeting

Once a decision is made to engage in problem finding and solving, a preliminary discussion ought to take place. Criteria that can be used to strengthen the fit between the staff development plan and the socio-political contexts of the institutions would encourage the planning to be:

Broad	Formal and informal assessment techniques ought to be used to determine questions and needs of all role representatives. An effort ought to be made to provide a series of offerings that are attractive to diverse groups.
Realistic	The program's success should be measured against standards that are attainable for the environment in which it is taking place.
Relevant	The staff development program should address questions that are important to decision makers and participants.
Fair	The program should be responsive to the needs of front line staff and clients as well as influential and bureaucratic sponsors.
Used	The staff development program should encourage change within the teaching-learning situation.

These criteria are based on the authors' long and varied experiences working in the field as well as others, most notably Michael Fullan (1979) who after reviewing inservice education found that most teacher inservice education tends to be one-shot based on topics selected with no participant input, with very little follow-up support for ideas and practices, or follow-up evaluation.

Factors To Consider

After the contact has been made and criteria for staff development have been agreed upon, then four specific factors need to be considered.

Turf. Where the planning meetings take place depends on what institution initiated the contact and where the initiator would feel most comfortable. As a rule K-12 educators have less free time during the school day than higher education educators. Therefore, school site meetings are highly recommended. More persons will attend, and university personnel can erase some of the stigma of appearing uncomfortable in schools. Above all, after school planning meetings should be avoided. Meetings ought to be rotated from site to site to allow all groups to be hosts.

Participants. Who will be invited to the meetings depends on timing and agenda. The first general meeting should include decision makers, facilitators, implementors, and curriculum persons. The clue here is "more is better." Avoid exclusion. All role groups should be represented; however, the size of the group should not exceed 15. Duplicate meetings will not replicate information. They will encourage factions to emerge. Where there are factions, there is dissent.

After the first meeting, subcommittees can be formed of those persons who will actually design, implement, and evaluate the plan. The original committee can remain in an advisory capacity to monitor the program. Any additional large group meetings may be semiannual or annual. Executive summaries can provide program documentation and evaluation information back to the advisory council.

Agenda. Understandably, each institution will have its own agenda, and all participants in the meeting will have an agenda. The formal written agenda should be compiled by the initiator of the contact. That way the rationale for the meeting and pertinent history can be shared. It is important that each group have input into the agenda and even meet together prior to the formal meeting to plan strategy. Representatives from higher education should be in agreement, as well as those from the school districts.

Evaluation. The staff development program should be evaluated formatively on a periodic basis to give feedback to the participants and advisory council. It should also be evaluated upon completion.

Working Case Studies

Kent State University College of Education faculty have a long history of collaborative efforts with schools and agencies located in Northeast Ohio. The model for institutional collaboration described in this paper has evolved from these experiences. This model is most effective in large efforts that involve either a variety of service delivery activities (e.g., workshops, continuing education unit activities, or courses) or major productions that can be repeated annually by biannually.

Akron Public City Schools Case Study. Personnel from Kent State University and Akron Public Schools have engaged in institutional collaboration since the late 1970s. One project, the KSU/Akron Elementary Intern Project, is a classic example of institutional collaboration. Through joint discussions, personnel from both institutions expressed some common needs. Kent State University personnel wanted to develop an urban field-based internship for elementary education majors. A primary goal was to develop the internship in "effective schools" environment with classroom teachers who were true team members in the effort. From previous experiences in field-based programs, university personnel felt it was important that teachers involved in the project should be effective with children and committed to the teacher education process. Akron Public School personnel wanted a program that would support the renewal of experienced teachers, an enhancement of the professional role of teachers and active participation in the governance of the program. The mobilization and planning phase of the project took two years. During the first year, "ground rules" for the collaborative effort were developed and "visions" were shared, refined and documented. The second year of the project was an inservice effort that focused upon developing a common set of understanding between university and school personnel. These activities took place in both general dialog sessions (non-credit) and credit bearing courses. From these experiences teachers and university personnel were selected by a planning committee to participate in the program's implementation. The third year, university interns were selected to participate in a year-long internship that was developed during the initial planning phase.

The KSU/Akron elementary internship is now completing its third year with interns. This project has been evaluated as successful and plans are underway for a fourth year. Critical to the success of this program was the long planning phase which fostered both ownership and commitment from both the university and school perspective. The planning committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis to evaluate the progress of the program and make suggestions for revisions. A critical indicator of the success of the program has been that as key personnel involved in the projects change, the program has maintained its vitality. This project is now used as a model for collaborative projects at both Kent State University and the Akron Public Schools.

Human Genetics Education. Human genetics is a very specialized, rapidly changing curriculum topic taught by secondary biology, health, and home economics educators. A needs assessment conducted by university, public school, and the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the March of Dimes personnel revealed that both school curriculum and teachers' knowledge of the field were dated. Initial efforts to provide "update" inservice for educators were undertaken by small groups from Northeast Ohio March of Dimes, university personnel, and the medical profession. Isolated efforts demonstrated that each institutional group failed to meet the expectations of the participants. In an attempt to address this problem, the model of institutional collaboration was used to pull together disperate institutions (Northeast Ohio March of Dimes, Akron Children's Hospital, Northeast Ohio Universities of Medicine, Kent State University, and local public school educators). As a result of a series of planning sessions, an intensive week-long workshop was developed that utilized the resources of all participating institutions. Genetics experts present the latest research

findings, and master teachers assist participants in translating research into classroom instructional activities. The results of this effort have been so satisfying that the participating institutions continue to offer this workshop biannually.

The KSU/Akron Elementary Intern Project and the Human Genetics Education Project are just two of many examples for institutional collaboration as it is employed at the College of Education, Kent State. Other projects involve large city school districts (e.g., Cleveland and Canton) and non-school agencies such as NASA, historical societies, and rehabilitation agencies. The mobilization and planning phases of the model are critical to its success. Although this phase of the project is time consuming and expensive, there are real benefits. The primary benefit is a quality program that represents the best of the participating institutions. A secondary outcome of this type of effort has been that once projects are planned and developed through this process, they are continued. Through natural revisions and conscientious refining, the quality of the program also continues to improve.

Conclusion

The costs of building a collaborative partnership between university and schools are great. It is a labor intensive effort involving many people, many meetings, and long hours of revision. Oftentimes, there is no pay-off because funds that had been appropriated for the activities have been earmarked for something else. When the appropriate staff development efforts are implemented, they may be idiosyncratic to the district and therefore not easily transferred to other settings. However, the planning process is replicable and can help reduce risk in university/school dialogue.

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